



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Northern District of Illinois
Western Division*

*Joseph C. Pedersen
Assistant U.S. Attorney*

*308 West State Street - Room 300
Rockford, Illinois 61101*

*PH: (815) 987-4444
FAX: (815) 987-4236*

February 17, 2005

SIX ROCKFORD AREA RESIDENTS PLEAD GUILTY TO CHARGES OF DRUG TRAFFICKING; ADMIT ORGANIZATIONS DISTRIBUTED 100s OF KILOGRAMS OF COCAINE & HEROIN; DRUGS & \$300,000 IN ASSETS SEIZED

ROCKFORD – PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; RICHARD W. SANDERS, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration; ROBERT D. GRANT, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; PAUL LOGLI, Winnebago County State's Attorney; RICHARD MEYERS, Winnebago County Sheriff; DUANE E. WIRTH, Boone County Sheriff; STEVEN PUGH, Rockford Police Chief; JAN W. NOBLE, Belvidere Police Chief; and WILLIAM FEITHEN, DeKalb Police Chief, today made the following announcement:

Today, **MICHAEL FRICKS**, 34 (DOB: 10/09/1970), formerly of 6311 Forrest Hills Road, Rockford, Illinois, pled guilty today in Rockford federal court to conspiring to manufacture and distribute cocaine and "crack" cocaine. With this plea, five Rockford men and one woman have now pleaded guilty to charges of drug trafficking in federal indictments involving two related narcotics trafficking organizations.

In pleading guilty, Fricks admitted that between February 2002 and February 2004, he conspired with others to distribute cocaine. Specifically, Fricks admitted that he operated an illegal cocaine trafficking organization with Jerry Wilson, Lonza Wilson, and others to distribute cocaine, and that he was supplied a total of at least 150 kilograms of cocaine by Ricardo Gallardo and his associates David Gallardo, Jose Espinoza, and others. Fricks acknowledged that Ricardo Gallardo provided him with the cocaine on credit, commonly referred to as "fronting" the drugs. Fricks would sell the cocaine to others and then pay Gallardo. According to the plea agreement, Fricks also instructed and assisted another individual in "cooking" over 500 grams of cocaine into crack cocaine and then selling the crack cocaine. Fricks is scheduled to be sentenced on April 29, 2005, at 10:00 a.m. He is being held in federal custody without bail pending sentencing.

JOSE LUIS ESPINOZA, also known as "Chelis," 26 (DOB: 4/25/1978), formerly of 1315 28th Street, Rockford, Illinois, pled guilty on February 5, 2005 to conspiring to distribute cocaine and heroin. Espinoza is scheduled to be sentenced on April 22, 2005. He is being held in federal custody without bail pending sentencing.

In pleading guilty, Espinoza admitted that beginning in October 2000 until February 2004, he conspired with his co-defendants Ricardo Gallardo and David Gallardo, and others to distribute cocaine and heroin. Espinoza admitted that between approximately April 2002 and February 12, 2004, Espinoza and Ricardo Gallardo distributed at least 180 kilograms of cocaine to Michael

Fricks, Jerry Wilson, and others. Espinoza, Ricardo Gallardo, and David Gallardo, collected money from Fricks, Wilson, and others once those individuals sold the cocaine to other individuals. Prior to distributing the cocaine that they obtained from their suppliers, Espinoza and Ricardo and David Gallardo would store the cocaine in vehicles or at various residences to avoid detection by law enforcement agencies including at the residence of their co-defendant Connie Gesswein, located on Creek Bend in Rockford. Espinoza admitted that on February 12, 2004, he and David Gallardo, went to the residence on Creek Bend and retrieved approximately 6.02 kilograms of cocaine, approximately 996 grams of heroin, and \$59,594 in United States currency. Shortly after retrieving those items, Espinoza and David Gallardo were stopped in Espinoza's vehicle and arrested by law enforcement agents.

Espinoza further acknowledged in his plea agreement that with proceeds obtained through his illegal drug trafficking activities, he purchased a 1999 Porsche Boxster from co-defendant James Orsinger for over \$25,000 in cash. In addition, Espinoza and Ricardo Gallardo purchased a 2004 Volkswagen Touareg from Orsinger on February 5, 2004 with proceeds of their illegal drug trafficking activities. Co-defendant Jorge Luna agreed to have the title of the Touareg placed in his name in order to allow Espinoza and Ricardo Gallardo to conceal the fact that Espinoza and Ricardo Gallardo were the true purchasers of the vehicle. Espinoza admitted that he and Ricardo Gallardo purchased the Touareg in order to transport controlled substances from Mexico to Rockford, Illinois. After the vehicle was purchased, they asked Luna to drive it from Rockford, Illinois to Ontario, California and Luna agreed to do so. Espinoza and Ricardo Gallardo had made arrangements for Luna to give the Touareg to another individual in California who was going to have a "trap compartment" installed. A trap compartment is a secret compartment installed in a vehicle which may be used to store illegal drugs or drug trafficking proceeds in a vehicle so that those items can be transported without being detected by law enforcement officers. Once the trap compartment was installed, Espinoza and Ricardo Gallardo intended to use the Touareg to unlawfully transport controlled substances from Mexico to Rockford, Illinois.

Four others charged in the federal indictments have also pled guilty:

JERRY WILSON, 27 (DOB: 5/16/1977), formerly of 3854 Thyme, Rockford, Illinois, pled guilty on May 28, 2005, to one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine and cocaine base. Wilson has not yet been sentenced. He is being held in federal custody without bail pending sentencing.

LONZA WILSON, also known as "Yak," 30 (DOB: 5/02/74), formerly of 1827 Chestnut Street, Rockford, Illinois, pled guilty February 4, 2005, in Rockford federal court to conspiring to manufacture and distribute cocaine and crack cocaine. Wilson is scheduled to be sentenced on April 29, 2005. He is being held in federal custody without bail pending sentencing.

DAVID GALLARDO, 24 (DOB: 6/10/1980), formerly of 729 Dickerman, Rockford, Illinois, plead guilty on January 14, 2005, to conspiring to distribute cocaine and heroin. He is scheduled to be sentenced on March 18, 2005. He is being held in federal custody without bail pending sentencing.

CONNIE GESSWEIN, 28 (DOB: 8/21/1976), formerly of 7611 Creek Bend, Rockford, Illinois, pled guilty on October 18, 2004 to controlling a drug storage and distribution enclosure. Gesswein has not yet been sentenced. She is being held in federal custody without bail pending sentencing.

Michael Fricks, Lonza Wilson, Jerry Wilson, and Jose Espinoza, each face a mandatory minimum penalty of twenty years of imprisonment, a maximum possible penalty of life imprisonment, a maximum fine of \$8,000,000, and a term of supervised release following their release from prison of at least ten years and up to life. David Gallardo, faces a maximum possible penalty of life imprisonment, a maximum fine of \$4,000,000, and a term of supervised release following his release from prison of at least five years and up to life. The actual sentence for each defendant will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

Charges are also pending against three other Rockford men in one of the indictments:

RICARDO GALLARDO, also known as “Solo,” 26 (DOB: 12/11/1978), formerly of 4622 Sunderman, Rockford, Illinois is charged with one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine and heroin, one count of distributing cocaine, one count of possession of cocaine and heroin with intent to distribute, four counts of money laundering, and four counts of engaging in an unlawful monetary transaction. He is being held in federal custody without bail.

JORGE LUNA, 30 (DOB: 8/19/1974), 627 Morgan Street, Rockford, Illinois is charged with one count of aiding and abetting a conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, one count of money laundering, and one count of engaging in an unlawful monetary transaction. He has been released on bond.

JAMES ORSINGER, 61 (DOB: 11/12/1943), 7670 Burr Oak, Roscoe, Illinois is charged with one count of aiding and abetting a conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, four counts of money laundering, and four counts of engaging in an unlawful monetary transaction. He has been released on bond.

Members of the public are reminded that indictments are only charges. Each defendant is entitled to a fair trial at which the government will have the burden of proving his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The indictments were the result of a nine-month investigation by the Rockford DEA Task Force consisting of law enforcement agents and officers from the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Winnebago County Sheriff’s Department, the Rockford Police Department, the Boone County Sheriff’s Department, the Belvidere Police Department, and the DeKalb Police Department. The Task Force seized eight kilograms of cocaine and one kilogram of heroin from the accused traffickers. Authorities also are seeking to forfeit assets valued at over \$300,000, allegedly belonging to members of the two trafficking organizations, under laws authorizing the seizure of properties used to conduct drug businesses or purchased with profits from those illegal businesses. These assets include two houses (4622 Sunderman Road & 6311 Forest Hills Road, Rockford), eight vehicles, jewelry, cash, and \$21,849 of proceeds from a February 12, 2004 Metro Centre concert allegedly financed by defendant Ricardo Gallardo through a company known as Mindright Entertainment, Inc. The Metrocentre has cooperated fully with the government’s efforts to forfeit these concert proceeds.

These cases are being prosecuted in United States District Court by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph C. Pedersen.

###